

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00
USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
SSM-03 IO-13 AID-05 /083 W
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O P 291208Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1293
INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY
AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY
AMCONSUL LAHORE
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRGORILY
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN PRIORITY
CINCPAC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 4357

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O.861652 GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PK, US
SUBJECT: ASSESSMENT OF BHUTTO'S SPEECH

SUMMARY: WE BELIEVE THAT IN MAKING HIS ANTI-AMERICAN
ALLEGATIONS BHUTTO WAS RESPONDING TO WHAT HE VIEWS AS
DOMESTIC POLITICAL NEEDS AND PRESSURES. HE IS A MAN MORE
CONCERNED WITH SHORT-TERM POLITICAL QUESTIONS RATHER THAN
LONG-TERM CONSIDERATIONS, AND WAS ACTING IN THE TRADITION
OF SUBCONTINENTAL POLITICS IN HIS CHARGES OF AN INTERNATIONAL
CONSPIRACY. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT BEFORE MAKING HIS SPEECH
HE HAD DECIDED ON FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES IN PAK FOREIGN POLICY.
HIS ALLEGATIONS WILL STRIKE A RESPONSIVE CHORD IN MANY
PAKISTANIS. WHETHER BHUTTO'S TIRADE WAS TIED TO HIS
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NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE EXPOSITION PAKISTAN NATIONAL ALLIANCE
IS AN OPEN QUESTION. EVEN IF A SETTLEMENT WITH THE OPPOSITION
IS ACHIEVED* THE QUESTION OF US SUPPORT FOR THE PNA IS LIKELY
TO REMAIN CENTER STAGE. END SUMMARY.

1. AT FIRST GLANCE, BHUTTO'S VITRIOLIC ATTACK ON THE US ON
APRIL 29 MIGHT BE SEEN AS INTENDING TO USHER IN A NEW AND

MORE ANTAGONISTIC CHAPTER IN PAKISTAN'S RELATIONS WITH THE US. ON REFLECTION, HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE THAT THE PRIME MINISTER - IN DELIVERING HIS ANTI-AMERICAN ALLEGATIONS BEFORE THE PARLIAMENT AND NATIONAL RADIO AND TELEVISION - WAS RESPONDING TO WHAT HE VIEWS AS DOMESTIC POLITICAL NEEDS AND PRESSURES. WE DOUBT HE WANTED HIS HARANGUE TO BE SEEN AS A PRELUDE TO DETERIORATING US/PAKISTANI RELATIONS. IF DETERIORATION DOES RESULT, HE WOULD BE WILLING TO ACCEPT IT POLITICALLY, BUT IT WAS NOT HIS PRIMARY REASON FOR MAKING THE SPEECH. WE BELIEVE, ON BALANCE, HE WOULD PREFER THAT HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE US DOES NOT WORSEN IF THIS CAN BE DONE WITHOUT DAMAGE TO HIS POLITICAL FORTUNES.

2. BHUTTO MUST HAVE KNOWN THAT HE WAS THREATENING PAKISTAN'S LONG-TERM FRIENDSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES BY PUBLICLY BRANDING US AS SUPPORTERS OF THE OPPOSITION INTERESTED IN ABETTING HIS DOWNFALL. HE IS, AS WE WELL KNOW HOWEVER, A MAN MUCH MORE CONCERNED WITH SHORT-TERM POLITICAL QUESTIONS RATHER THAN LONG-TERM CONSIDERATIONS. HIS PRESENT POLITICAL CRISIS ONLY SERVES TO REINFORCE THIS CHARACTER TRAIT. HE UNDOUBTEDLY DECIDED THAT ON BALANCE THE BENEFIT TO BE GAINED IN HIS STRUGGLE FOR POLITICAL SURVIVAL BY BLAMING THE US IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN ANY DISADVANTAGES ELSEWHERE OR IN THE LONGER TERM.

3. A TRADITIONAL TACTIC IN SUBCONTINENTAL POLITICS IS TO CLAIM A CONSPIRACY AND/OR INTERNATIONAL PRESSURES CAUSE SET-BACKS IN POLITICAL FORTUNES. BY FINGERING THE UNITED STATES, BHUTTO IS ACTING IN ESTABLISHED SUBCONTINENTAL POLITICAL CONFIDENTIAL

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TRADITION, THOUGH CHARACTERISTICALLY WITH GREATER BOMBAST AND IMPACT. SUCH A TACTIC COMES EASILY TO THE PM AND IS ESPECIALLY APPEALING NOW, SINCE HE IS CONTINUALLY LOOKING FOR WAYS TO TAKE THE HEAT OFF AND GIVE HIM GREATER MANEUVERING SPACE WHILE FIGHTING FOR HIS POLITICAL SURVIVAL. WE THINK BHUTTO'S CLAIM WILL STRIKE A RESPONSIVE CHORD IN MANY PAKISTANIS WHO ACCEPT WITHOUT HESITATION THE CONSPIRACY THEORY OF POLITICS. ALTHOUGH THERE MAY BE SOME, ESPECIALLY IN THE MILITARY AND THE URBAN UPPER CLASS, WHO REALIZE THE CHARGES ARE ABSURD AND BASELESS, WE BELIEVE MOST PAKISTANIS WILL GIVE THEM AT LEAST SOME CREDENCE.

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

4. AN OPEN QUESTION IS WHETHER OR NOT BHUTTO'S TIRADE WAS
TIED TO HIS NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE OPPOSITION PAKISTAN NATIONA
ALLIANCE. THE PNA HAD BEEN THINKING THAT IT WAS HAKING
PROGRESS IN MOVING TOWARD AN AGREEMENT WITH THE PM THAT WOULD
END THE CONFRONTATION. ACCORDING TO THE UPI CORR PONDENT
WHO SAW ACTING PNA CHIEF PIR PAGARO AFTER PM'S SPEECH, THE
PNA WAS "STUNNED" AND "SHOCKED." PIR SAHIB SAID, NOT ENTIRELY
FACETIOUSLY, THAT THE PNA WOULD ASK THE PRESIDENT TO APPOINT
A PANEL OF PSYCHIATRISTS TO EXAM THE PRIME MINISTER.
AT SAME TIME, THE OPPOSITION UNDOUBTEDLY REALIZES IT HAS
BEEN PUT ON DEFENSIVE BY PM AND PIR SAHIB HAS PUBLICLY AND FORMALLY
DENIED CHARGES OF ANY SUPPORT FROM OU SADE PAKISTAN. IF
BHUTTO AND THE PNA WERE NEARING AGREEMENT, THE PM'S SPEECH
CERTAINLY CANNOT HELP IMPROVE THE ATMOSPHERICS OR MAKE
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THE PNA FEEL ANY MORE CONFIDENT ABOUT NEGOTIATING WITH BHUTTO.

5. IF A SETTLEMENT WITH THE OPPOSITION IS ACHIEVED, THE
QUESTION OF US SUPPORT FOR THE PNA COULD WELL REMAIN CENTER
STAGE. IF NEW ELECTIONS ARE HELD,WE FULLY EXPECT THE PPP
CANDIDATES TO USE THE PM'S CHARGES AND AMPLIFY THEM IN THEIR

CAMPAIGNS. THE PNA WILL BE FORCED TO RESPOND, AND WE COULD BE FACED WITH THE SPECTACLE OF A TYPICALLY VICIOUS SUB-CONTINENTAL POLITICAL CAMPAIGN WITH THE CHARGE OF US SUPPORT FOR ONE SIDE A MAJOR ISSUE.

6. IN SUM, WE BELIEVE THAT BEFORE BHUTTO DELIVERED HIS SPEECH HE DID NOT DECIDE HE WANTED TO MAKE FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES IN PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY AND SPOKE ACCORDINGLY. RATHER, HE WAS BEING HIS POLITICAL SELF AND SAW THE CHARGES AS A WAY OF RELIEVING PRESSURE AND DIVERTING PUBLIC ATTENTION. THIS IS NOT TO CONDONE HIS POSITION. WE DO NOTE HOWEVER THAT HE PROBABLY SAW HIS ALLEGATIONS AS ANOTHER MOVE ON THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL CHESS BOARD. ANY THOUGHTS OF LONGER RANGE PROBLEMS THIS COULD CAUSE WITH THE US WERE OF LESSER CONCERN. INSOFAR AS HE HAS THOUGHT ABOUT THESE LONG-RANGE PROBLEMS, HE HAS PROBABLY CONCLUDED THAT HE WILL BE ABLE TO MANAGE THEM IN HIS OWN SELF-CONFIDENT STYLE.
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